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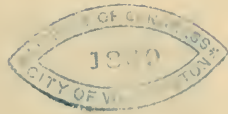












# SPEECH

OF

Hon. C. A. ELDRIDGE, of Wisconsin,

IN THE

House of Representatives, March 28, 1868,

AGAINST THE

BILL MAKING A CONSTITUTION FOR ALABAMA AND ENFORCING UPON HER PEOPLE NEGRO GOVERNMENT.

Mr. ELDRIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I have been taught to believe that our system of Government, State and National, embodied the perfection of all the models. I have supposed it so formed that it was safe from the assaults of Radical innovation, and not subject to change or alteration from within, except in the manner provided in the Constitution. With such opinions, I cannot view the constant assaults upon its several Departments, supposed to have been its chief perfection, but with sadness and alarm. These Departments, intended to work in harmony, operating only as proper checks and balances upon each other, cannot long continue in open and hostile antagonism without fatal consequences. And yet, what do we behold? The Executive power is assailed, trenched upon, hedged about, and circumscribed till its influence is scarcely perceptible, and its chief officer finally is sought to be deposed and removed because he will not altogether abdicate and surrender the office and power to a partisan Congress. The judiciary, too, that last refuge of patriotic hope, that supposed conservator of popular liberty when all others should fail, is in menace. It is not only menaced, but its prerogatives, powers, and jurisdiction are assailed with a frenzied zeal and partisan hate that admit of no room for doubt of the result. It is no longer to be the independent, peaceful, pure, and impartial arbiter of our disputes and controversies; but the fiat has gone forth from a Partisan Legislature that the judges of the highest Court of the land must soil the ermine in doing its bidding, or surrender the judicial power. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. SCHENCK] boastingly proclaimed on this floor only the other day that the purpose was to "clip its power" in every possible way. And thus it is that, one by one, the very bulwarks of liberty are being thrown down, and all the safeguards of the people's rights destroyed. These measures, I repeat, fill me with apprehension and alarm. With the President deposed, the prerogatives and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court taken away, a partisan Congress will riot in power unrestrained. With the sword and the purse at its command, who so foolhardy as to believe our liberties safe? Look at the War Department, barricaded and picketed with armed soldiers in time of profound peace, and in the capital of the Republic.

And, sir, I cannot forget the most significant fact, that only a few days ago an attempt was made, probably at the suggestion of the usurping Secretary of War, to smuggle through the House in an appropriation bill a provision for the removal of the present Capitol police, and authorizing the Secretary of War to detail non-commissioned officers



and soldiers to take charge of the Capitol building and grounds. Had this not been discovered, and the provision had become a law, we should be sitting to-day and legislating under the gleam of the sword, and the Supreme Court rendering its decisions at the point of the bayonet. Verily, coming events are casting their shadows before. Are these things to familiarize our eyes to what is in waiting for us? Are they the advance pickets of the army with which Congress, if permitted to pursue unrestrained its purpose, will control the destinies of the people, and by which it will enforce its edicts; by which it will make and unmake States; make and unmake Presidents; make and unmake the Courts, and force them all to do its bidding? Is this the power, the policy, that is to control us?

Mr. Speaker, I desire to enter my protest against this bill and to relieve myself of all responsibility for its passage. Never, in my judgment, was there a more inexcusable or unjustifiable measure. It has no warrant in the Federal Constitution, and no justification or precedent in the practice of this Government, unless, indeed, it be in the kindred measures of so called reconstruction. It is in clear and unmistakable violation of all the underlying fundamental principles of the Republic.

Sir, if there be one idea upon which this Government was formed more essential and fundamental than any other, that idea is, that the people of the United States are sovereign, and entitled by nature to the right of self-government. This principle underlies all our institutions, and is co-extensive with the utmost boundaries of the United States and its authority. The source of all power is the people, and their only grant or authority to the Federal Government is the Constitution. If the power is not there found, it does not exist. Under the Constitution, there are, and there can be, no conquered, tributary, or subject States. Equality of citizenship and the right of self-government have never been granted or surrendered by the people or States of the Republic. To do this would be voluntary submission to the chains and manacles of slavery. The right of self-government constitutes the liberty and freedom of the citizen. Without the enjoyment of this right no man can be styled free; no man can enjoy the liberty intended to be secured by the Federal Constitution. It is the dearest, the most essential right of American citizenship. It cannot be taken away without totally subverting the Constitution, and destroying our system of Government altogether.

Sir, upon what provision of the Constitution can this bill rest? To what do its friends appeal for their justification in its support? I do not make this inquiry with reference to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS.] He is consistent and logical; he has never stultified himself by any pretended constitutional sanction. He proclaims all the reconstruction measures of Congress "outside" the Constitution. But to those who admit the obligation and duty of obedience to the fundamental law of the land, I ask them, in all sincerity and honesty, under which of its provisions, or by what right, do they justify their action upon this bill?

Article four, section three, provides that—

New States may be admitted by the Congress into the Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the junction of two or more States or parts of States without the consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned, as well as of the Congress.

The State of Alabama is certainly not a new State; it is not a State formed by the junction of two or more States or parts of States; it is not a new State formed within the jurisdiction of another State. And, if it were a new State so formed and erected, there is no consent of the Legislature of the State concerned. There is, then, no authority for this bill in this section, and it is the only provision of the Constitution relating to the admission of States into the Union.



But if it be said that the purpose of this bill and the measures of Congress preceding it are only to reorganize government in the State of Alabama and not to admit the State, as a new State, the inquiry is still pertinent, Where does Congress get the authority? I have looked in vain to find any authority for this even. I can find no authority in the Constitution for any interference by Congress in the organization or reorganization of a government by the people of an existing State of the Union. The right to form and reform, to organize and reorganize governments is, under our system, a right original and inherent in the people. It is only the exercise of the right of self-government—the original right upon which all our State and National Governments are founded. The right to form and establish governments does not come from Congress; it is not a constitutional grant. It is one of the rights never delegated, never parted with by the people. It was derived from a source higher than Congresses or Parliaments. It is the right, the power to make and unmake both. All the “just powers of government are by the consent of the governed.”

If the right of the people to govern themselves be usurped or surrendered, to that extent the people are enslaved. They cannot part with it or allow it to be taken from them and be free. The people must either govern themselves or be governed by others. They must make their own constitutions and laws, or submit to constitutions and laws made for them. The right given up, conceded to others, to make the laws, the kind and quality of the laws depend upon the will of the makers, and the people are at their mercy. They are no longer free.

Sir, these views are too elementary to admit of argument. The principles stated lie at the very foundation of the Republic. They were most clearly annunciated in the Declaration of Independence, and are imbedded in all our State and Federal Constitutions. They are the foundation ideas of all free government. They are the principles upon which alone our system of government can be maintained. They are the only principles upon which any free government can be maintained.

Now, what does this bill propose? I will not here stop to argue the question of whether Alabama is a State—whether it is out of the Union. That it is a State, and a State in the Union, I have several times shown in this House, to my own satisfaction at least, and by arguments and facts that cannot be refuted, denied, or answered. It is an existing State in the Union, or the history of the last five years is a lie. It is a State in the Union, or the war for the preservation of the Union, and the vast expenditure of life and treasure in its name and on its behalf, is a monstrous crime. It is an existing State, or all the professions and promises of the party controlling the Government during these long and bloody years, by which so many brave men were induced to offer their lives a sacrifice on the battle field, and so many homes and hearts made desolate, were stupendous frauds and cheats. It is, and has been, a State saved and preserved to the Union by the gigantic struggle through which we have passed, or the party now in power has been all the time, from the beginning of the war till this day, in bold, wicked, criminal conspiracy with the rebels and secessionists, aiding them in accomplishing, and now finally consummating, what they could not alone accomplish—the division and final dismemberment of this Union. Alabama is not out of the Union, is not destroyed as a State, or every man who fought, aided, encouraged, or countenanced the war, with any consciousness of what was to be the result, whether in the North or the South, whether on the one side or the other, is a conscious traitor to this Union of States, and an enemy of the Republic of States.

But, I repeat, the State of Alabama is not destroyed. It still exists in the Union. This last bill admits that it is a State in the Union. The first bill provided for the admission of the State and for its representation; this last only for its admission to representation.

And now, if it is to be turned out or excluded from the Union, or dealt with in any other manner than as a State in the Union, it will be the work of this Congress alone. All the other enemies of this once proud and noble State; all those who would have taken her from the Union by war or force; all those who would have incorporated her in another confederacy of States, surrendered and abandoned the conspiracy for her dismemberment. It is Congress alone that would now exclude her from or degrade her in the Union. It is Congress that has made and would humiliate her to accept this constitution. And this is to be done by this bill. By this bill and the previous acts of Congress her nine hundred and sixty-four thousand two hundred and one population are to be made slaves, are to have forced upon them a government in which they have in reality, as a people, had no part in creating; a government obnoxious to all their tastes, hateful and odious to them. The constitution made by themselves, and under which the State came into the Union, and which the rebellion in vain strove to overthrow and destroy, is to be taken from them by this Congress, by this bill, and a constitution in which the vast majority feel no interest, and by which their dearest rights are taken away, is to be forced upon them.

The educated, the intelligent, the cultivated, the refined, the experienced, are to be excluded from all part or share in the government of the State, and all their interests and rights of life, liberty, and property are to be given into the hands and keeping of an ignorant, debased, uneducated, uncivilized, servile minority. And all this is to be done, not in violation of the Federal Constitution only, but in most flagrant violation and disregard of the very act of Congress under which and by virtue of which this bill is justified.

And, according to the preamble of this bill, this monstrous measure is denominated, is to be taken and considered, the voluntary act of the people of Alabama! Seventy thousand, all except one thousand of which are negroes, are all who are claimed or pretended to have approved or to be in favor of the constitution which is thus sought to be forced upon this people. And these seventy thousand—sixty-nine thousand blacks and about one thousand blacker whites—are denominated, are to be, the governing people of Alabama! And this, too, when there stands on the registers made by the friends of the measure, under the direction and authority of Congress, dictated and managed by the sword, one hundred thousand more competent and legal voters, mostly white men, who condemn, loathe, and execrate such constitution and government. Add to this thirty thousand or more disfranchised by the despotic enactments of Congress, and the tyrant agents appointed to administer them, and tell me, are not the preamble and all pretenses that this constitution is framed or adopted by the people of Alabama a lie?

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS,] Chairman of the Committee, and who reported the original bill, stated, when he moved to recommit, that there were twenty odd thousand majority against the constitution. He said:

After a full examination of the final returns from Alabama, which we had not got when this bill was drawn, I am satisfied, for one, that to force a vote on this bill, and admit the State against our own law, where there is a majority of twenty odd thousand against the constitution, would not be doing such justice in legislation as will be expected by the people. With that view of the case, I shall vote for the motion to recommit, and on that motion I demand the previous question.

The bill was recommitted.

That this constitution is not the choice of the people, that it would be an act of injustice to pass the bill, is declared. There is no difference between that bill and this. In principle and effect they are the same. They are in violation of the will of the majority. They are in violation of that great right of the people to make their own fundamental law; they would place the majority under the control of the minority. I agree with what the gentleman said, that to pass this bill against our own law, where there is a majority of twenty odd thousand against the constitution, would not be doing such justice in legislation as will be expected by the people.

And yet this monstrous wrong, this outrage upon all the essential principles of the Republic, is to be forced, at the point of the bayonet, upon a free people, by the men who prate longest and loudest of freedom, liberty, and popular rights. In this day of progress, of advancing civilization; in the nineteenth century; in this "land of the free and home of the brave;" in this Republic, composed of sovereign, co-equal States, united by and under the Constitution, the matchless work of Washington, Madison, and their noble compeers, one of those States upon which the Federal Union rests, of which it is formed, is to be dismantled, robbed of the constitution made by its people, and to have forced upon it and its million of inhabitants a constitution of government dictated to it by Congress, and approved by only seventy thousand uneducated negroes—ignorant, squalid, degraded negroes! Do the annals of the world present an

instance of such stupendous folly, absurdity, and wickedness? It can be justified by no man not filled with infernal hatred of our form of government, and desirous of its overthrow. It must, it can only end in blood. No man in his senses can expect anything else. The white man, the white race, in the history of the world, has never been the servant of the black. The madness or folly of Congress can never compel him to submit to African domination or government.

Sir, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. STEVENS] tells the country, by way, I suppose, of reconciling the people to this horrid work, that "we are not now merely expounding a Government; we are building one; we are making a nation." And the committee reporting this bill, in similar language, tell us that we are "building a mighty nation." They say: "But while this free people are rebuilding a mighty nation, in which there must be no taint of despotism or injustice, they have examined carefully all the provisions of the Constitution, and, as a precedent which they hope will never be departed from, but which becomes necessary by the injustice of the sister States, they have determined that no State shall ever be admitted into the Union where the right to universal suffrage shall not be made permanent and impossible of violation." They have determined—the committee have determined—that no State shall ever be admitted into "this mighty nation" where the right of universal suffrage shall not be made permanent. What is to be done with New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Kentucky, and the other States which have not yet made universal suffrage permanent? They are never to be admitted into this new nation till they bow to negro domination. "Not expounding a Government," but "making a nation," "rebuilding a mighty nation, in which there must be no taint of despotism or injustice!" Was there ever such impudence, such folly, such absurdity, such treason? This Reconstruction Committee, those who support this bill, members of Congress, not expounding the Constitution, not legislating according to its provisions for the Union, but building a nation, a "mighty nation." Who commissioned Congress? Where did it get the power? Who can read these bold, unblushing avowals, these foul utterances of treason to the Union, that the purpose is not to maintain this Republic of States, but to build a Government, a mighty nation, in its stead, and not stand aghast at the declaration! But there is to be "no taint of despotism" in this new, this "mighty nation!" Oh no; there is no despotism in forcing a constitution upon the people against its will. No despotism in forcing half a million white, intelligent, educated, refined men, women, and children, to live under the domination of seventy thousand negroes. There is no taint of despotism or injustice in forcing the people of a sovereign State to surrender their constitution of government, and accept one made by negroes. Or, can anything on earth be more cruel, arbitrary, unjust, and despotic, than such a government so enforced?

I am glad this committee and the gentleman from Pennsylvania have had the hardihood to proclaim their revolutionary purpose. There need be no longer any cavil or dispute. They would build a government; they would make a mighty nation on the ruins of the old Union. Let the people of the States that deny universal negro suffrage take heed and understand that no State shall ever be admitted into this "mighty nation" which this revolutionary party is now making, "where the right of universal suffrage shall not be made permanent and impossible of violation." This has become "necessary by the injustice of sister States." These are the solemn utterances of the representatives of a great party—the party that is building a "mighty nation." They are the official declarations of members of Congress, of a committee of the House of Representatives, while in the very act of violating its declared principles. They are the opening up of the revolutionary schemes of the party now controlling the destinies of the Republic. The grand temple of republican liberty, erected by our ancestors with so much care and wisdom, is to be torn down; the pillars of that majestic edifice, resting upon the solid and safe foundation of popular sovereignty and the right of self-government, are to be wrenched from their foundations, and a new government, "a mighty nation," built in its place! And this is the war that is now being waged against our system of government, against the Constitution and Government of our fathers. Congress is not "expounding" the Constitution under which it was created, and exercising the powers granted by it; but it is usurping the power and arrogating to itself the right to make a government, to build a nation. The people are no longer to be consulted or regarded, no longer to be the architects of the Government under which they live. They must submit to the arbitrary hand of power, and bare their necks to the yoke prepared by Congress and such agents as it in its majestic wisdom may depute. Congress is to rule the Empire and sway the destinies of the people with more than regal power. Who will hereafter pretend that ours is a government "deriving all its just powers from the consent of the governed?" It is no longer a



Government "by the people for the people." It is a Government of the people by Congress; it is the rule of the servant over the master; it is an utter denial of the right of self-government; it is Federal usurpation; it is Federal tyranny—Federal oppression.

The gentlemen who led the other side of this House understood this in 1858. How energetically and eloquently our worthy Speaker [Mr. COLFAX] inveighed against Federal interference with the affairs and constitution of Kansas. How ably did he argue for the right of self-government—the right of the people to make their own constitutions, unavowed and uninfluenced by Federal power.

Let me read from his speech on that occasion, and see if it is not applicable to the present; if it does not show that this bill ought not to pass:

A constitution is before us, not framed by the authority of an enabling act, the last Congress having failed to concur in the passage of one—not ratified by the people interested at any election in which the right to choose, the simple power of saying yes or no, had been conceded—but framed by a convention, elected by an imperfect, unfair, disfranchising, and, therefore, swindling census and registry, whose members represented, on an average, exactly thirty votes apiece; who needed an army to protect them while in session from the indignation of the people whose organic law they pretended to have been commissioned to make; who themselves conceded all that I have charged against them by submitting the constitution only to those who were willing to vote for it and to swear, besides, to support it; and whose ill-shapen and illegitimate off-spring was repudiated as spurious by an overwhelming majority of ten thousand at a fair open election, authorized by the Governor and Legislature of the Territory.

Ten thousand were enough to stigmatize the rule as despotic then; with a majority of twenty odd thousand against the constitution to-day, the House proposes to pass this bill:

And yet this fraudulent instrument, which no one here is hardy enough to claim as the voice of the majority of the people of the proposed State; which no more speaks their will than does the constitution of conquered and enthralled France speak the will of the freemen of America; and which every one, here or elsewhere, knows full well is loathed and scorned and repudiated by the people who are to be forced with the bayonet to live under it—this instrument is pressed upon us for ratification on the technical ground that it emanated from a body which was nominally a convention representing the people of Kansas; that it has passed the ordeal of a pretended, one-sided submission, and that we have, therefore, no right to go behind it and inquire whether it is or is not the will of the people of that distant Territory.

The gentleman proceeds in another passage to put the following inquiry:

Imagine, sir, George Washington sitting in the White House; that noble patriot, whose whole career is a brilliant illustration of honor and purity in high places, and who doubts that if such a constitution as this had been submitted to him for his sanction, he would have spurned from his door with contempt and scorn the messenger who bore it? Or ask yourself what would have been the indignant answer of Thomas Jefferson, who proclaimed as the battle cry of the Revolution that great truth enshrined in the Declaration which has made his name immortal, and which scattered to the winds the sophistries and technicalities of the royalists of our land, that "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed;" not the implied consent of enforced submission, but the actual, undeniable, unquestioned consent of the freemen who are to bear its burdens and enjoy its blessings? If a messenger had dared to enter the portals of the White House when that stern old man of iron will, Andrew Jackson, of Tennessee, lived within it, and asked him to give his endorsement and approval, the sanction of his personal character and official influence to a constitution reeking with fraud, which its framers were seeking to enforce on a people who protested and denounced and loathed and repudiated it, and to go down to history as its voluntary advocate and champion, that messenger, I will warrant, would have remembered the torrent of rebuke with which he would have been overwhelmed till the latest hour of his life.

Then he makes an appeal in almost the same language that is used in the appeal to Congress on behalf of the people of Alabama. He says:

She appeals to you to release her from the grasp of this despot and dictator, and to let her go free. In the language of an eloquent and gifted orator of my own State, I say, "When she comes to us let it be as a willing bride, and not as a fettered and manacled slave."

So I say of Alabama.

The gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM,] too, strange to say, spoke against the Kansas constitution on the ground that it was not freely and fairly adopted by the people who were to live under it. He, one of the committee who reports in favor of this bill, in favor of forcing this constitution upon the people of Alabama against their will, then contended manfully that the people had some rights, and that Congress was bound to respect those rights. How rhetorically and bitterly eloquent he became at the thought of the Federal Executive interfering with the people in the formation of their constitution! He denounces it as usurpation—a gross outrage and wrong upon the people of Kansas. Let me read:

I say such a thing is without precedent in the legislation of the country; is unauthorized by and in direct contravention of the Constitution of the United States. There is nothing in the Constitution of the United States which gives colorable authority for such legislation. There is nothing in the past legislation of this country that gives colorable authority for it. It is a simple act of despotism attempted to be enacted here by the Congress of the United States under cover of the Constitution which bears the peerless name of Washington. It were better, sir, that that sacred instrument should perish as though smote by the lightning of heaven than that any such act as that now proposed should be placed upon our statute book.

What is it? Why, that the Congress of the United States shall dictate to freemen that they shall accept, under pains and penalties, a bribe, and thereby become subject to a constitution which they never made, which they abhor, and which they have condemned.

Now comes the principle which I hold to be the true one, and which I want the gentleman from Ohio, when he makes his speech to-day, to answer:

I say, and I say it without the fear of contradiction, that the genius of our Constitution is this: that new State constitutions must emanate from the people within the limits of the proposed State, and from no other source.

He said it with more eloquence and force, I have no doubt, than I could.

Sir, what has caused these most remarkable changes in the views and opinions of gentlemen? If popular sovereignty was true doctrine, if self-government was right in 1858, why is it not now? If the people of Kansas were entitled under our Constitution to frame their own fundamental law, unawed by Federal bayonets and uncontrolled by Federal interference, why are not the people of Alabama? Has the result in Kansas convinced gentlemen of their error, answered all their arguments? Let the long line of emigrants fleeing from the military despotism created in and over the States of the South, to seek an asylum from the oppressions of Congressional reconstruction in the State of Kansas, conclude the answer. The gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS,] in advocating confiscation, gave utterance to this most barbarous and inhuman sentiment: "If it drives them into exile so much the better." I would that gentlemen and all those who advocate this and its kindred measures of tyranny, injustice, and oppression, could have beheld only last week, as described to me by an eye witness, the scene of sixty emigrants at the depot of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad in Baltimore, on their way to Kansas, voluntary exiles from their native homes in North Carolina. There were old men and young men; there were women and little children—a poverty-stricken, sad, and sorrowful band—resting their emaciated and weary limbs upon the floor, and allaying their pangs of hunger upon crusts of bread. They had seen better and happier days; they had enjoyed the luxuries of life, the blessings of education and refinement. But, broken-hearted and in despair, they had left their sunny and once happy homes in the South, the scenes of their childhood, the birthplaces of their children, and the graves of their ancestors, in the hope to find in free Kansas a place where they and their posterity may hereafter enjoy the blessings of liberty and freedom from the despotism which is crushing and destroying their old State.

Sir, the only policy under which the States of this Union or the people can prosper is that which honestly administers and fully secures to all the Constitution, and prohibits the exercise by the Federal Government of any powers not therein granted. The right of self-government cannot be denied or infringed upon with safety to the Commonwealth. The course that Congress has pursued, and is pursuing in the passage of this bill, will not restore good government and prosperity to Alabama. The wrong and injustice of forcing a government upon her people against their will will not soon be forgotten. The memory of it will be transmitted from father to son, and will assuredly bring the result which a sense of oppression and injury never fail to produce. The exercise of a little magnanimity, generosity, forgiveness, and kindness by the conqueror would have settled all our difficulties long ago; would have restored the States to the Union, and prosperity and happiness to the people. With this spirit the victorious North should have met its conquered countrymen. Christian charity can do more now than an army with banners. A withdrawal of the armies and restoration of the government into the hands of the people is all that is necessary. That would restore the happiness and prosperity of former days—the happiness and prosperity which will never come of subjugation, oppression, and wrong.

Mr. Speaker, no man has been more desirous and anxious, I believe, than myself that the State of Alabama and the other excluded States should be represented in Congress. I believe she has been for almost three years justly entitled to have her Representatives on this floor and in the Senate. She has been, against all law and all precedents, wrongfully and unjustly excluded. But I cannot be a party to this bastard constitution, this negro government. I cannot recognize this as the State or constitution of the State. I cannot, by any act of mine, consent to this outrage, not upon Alabama only, but upon the people of all the States now represented in Congress. I cannot consent that seventy thousand negroes shall be the depositaries of the government of that great State; that to them shall be committed the future destinies of half a million of my own race; that they shall send seven Representatives to this House and two Senators to the Senate, when eight hundred thousand white citizens of my own State of Wisconsin can have but six Representatives and two Senators. This constitution may be good or bad; I would not vote to fasten a constitution, the best the

world ever saw, upon an unwilling people. To command my support it must be the voluntary choice of those who are to live under it.

With my views I could not vote this constitution upon the people of that State if it had been made by the angels in heaven, instead of having been dictated by Congress, and enforced by the despotic power of the army. It matters little what the constitution of government may be; if it be not the choice of the people, it will be considered and felt to be a most unjust and grinding despotism, a cruel and oppressive burden. The lightest oppression is too heavy for the proud and brave long to bear. The iron in the soul wounds more deeply than manacles upon the limbs. There is no agony like that the spirit feels when crushed and bowed down by wrong and oppression. The burdens we take upon ourselves and bear with ease and pleasure, would, if forced upon us by others, crush us to the earth. It is the free, the unfettered spirit that can do and brave and bear. The load the freeman carries would crush the slave. The consciousness that the man is free gives him power to do and patience to endure.

Mr. Speaker, the acts of to-day will affect this Republic for all time to come for good or for ill. Our footprints, as we are now moving along, will remain till the dust of ages shall cover them up, unless, as we have reason greatly to fear, the gathering storm of revolution, or the rising passion of a wronged and outraged people, shall wash them out with blood. The idea of the people of that State, the white people, born in freedom and accustomed to its enjoyment, submitting to a constitution formed and forced upon them as this is to be, is utterly absurd and preposterous. I have not so mean an opinion of my countrymen, my own race, the white people of Alabama, as to believe it. They may submit; they will submit so long as they are in the presence of and awed by standing armies, and no longer. The time will assuredly come when the pride of race and blood will not brook the domination of inferior men; when the white people of that State, conscious of the great wrong and injustice inflicted upon them by the unhallowed hand of despotic power, and conscious, too, of their God given strength and their right to be free, will rise in their might and drive the African rulers you shall place over them into the sea. They will regard as little the constitution enforced upon them by this bill as do those who vote for it the one they have sworn to support, and which this bill so wantonly and flagrantly violates.

This bill and all such measures as subordinate the majority to the rule of the minority are but invitations to war and bloodshed. Eternal justice will bring just retribution. It may end in the destruction of both blacks and whites. It can never end in the domination by the former over the latter. I beg gentleman to hesitate long before they endeavor to bring it about. There is a point beyond which you cannot go. Hold that people, if you will, under the sword—punish them till the most malignant passion is satiated, but seek not to make them the slaves of their former servants. They can submit to the rule of the sword without dishonor, but to be ruled and governed by the negro they cannot, without utter disgrace and degradation. If you dare not trust them to govern themselves as communities, as a people, hold them in the iron grasp of military power till you dare, but do not dishonor and degrade your own countrymen and race; do not overthrow our system of government in an experiment that all history teaches must end in disaster and blood.

I can add nothing more forcible and eloquent than the remarks of the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BINGHAM] against the Kansas bill, substituting only the word Alabama in place of Kansas:

I repeat it; look to it, ye representatives of the people, ye men who keep ward and watch over the Constitution and the Union, that the free men of Alabama are not by your act driven to the dread election of submission and dishonor or resistance unto blood. I tell you, notwithstanding their alleged want or manliness, Alabama has hosts of citizens, good men and true, who will never stoop to be your abject slaves—

“While Heaven has light or earth has graves!”

Sanction this constitution, conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and you can only maintain it by the Federal arm and the Federal bayonet. It can never secure the voluntary support of the free people. Sanction this constitution, and with it sanction, as it sanctions, that code of abominations which the invaders of Alabama enacted, and you compel resistance. Resistance to such legislation would be duty, not crime; patriotism, not treason. The resisters or insurgents, or rebels, if you please, could point you, in vindication of their rebellion, to the fact that the history of Federal intervention in Alabama, ever since the day of its organization, is but a history of repeated injuries and usurpations.

I close with reading a single passage from another speech of the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM,] made on the occasion of the consideration of the constitution of Kansas:

In this hour of the world's repose and the world's hope, shall America, the child and the stay of the earth's old age, prove false to her most sacred traditions, false to her holiest trust, and by this proposed enactment consent to strike down liberty in her own temple, and forge chains for her own children?

Let the gentleman answer that. I now yield the remainder of my time to the gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr. BECK.]









































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